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TWO

DISCOURSES

ON THE

MORAL STATE OF MAN.

DELIVERED IN THE

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BY REV. W. C. DANA.

PASTOR OF SAID CHURCH.

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FIRST DISCOURSE.

ISAIAH I, 2. "Hear, O Heavens; and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken,—I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

It is generally conceded that the Bible teaches that human nature is depraved. This doctrine is, to a certain extent, admitted by many, who would be slow to give credence to the strong statements which are sometimes made on the subject. All would be willing to admit, that man is not so good a being as we can easily conceive that he might be; not so good a being, as a lover of goodness, or even of happiness, might naturally wish that he was. There is, then, no dispute as to the fact, that a certain measure of depravity characterizes our whole race.

But when the assertion is made, that all mankind are *totally depraved*,—that entire moral corruption is the characteristic of every human being,—this assertion is met, not only with decided unbelief, but also with strong and indignant antipathy. "What," it is asked; "is there nothing good, nothing virtuous, nothing lovely, in human nature? Is total depravity *universal* among men? Are all human beings so perfectly alike in character, that one general description answers equally to all; and is that universal character simply *utter depravity*?"

He must be a bold man, who would, without qualification, answer these questions affirmatively; who would deliberately, with the book of human nature spread out before him, and with eyes open to read that book, assert, that all mankind are so equally and utterly depraved, (in the current, *popular sense* of that word, *depravity*,) that there is in native human character, nothing lovely, nothing worthy of commendation.

We freely affirm, that we do not believe any *such* doctrine of *total depravity*. We do not believe that human nature is, in itself, utterly destitute of lovely and amiable qualities; that it is simply one undistinguished mass of moral putrescence. We

do not find any such doctrine in the word of God. We do not find any such *fact* when we look abroad upon human society. We fully sympathize with that utter want of conviction, nay, more, with that positive repugnance and revulsion of feeling, with which *such statements* of the doctrine of *total depravity* are usually met by reflecting minds.

For how is it possible to deny that in character, destitute of religious faith, there may yet subsist many worthy and attractive qualities—many traits, deserving of commendation and of imitation—many things good in themselves, good as far as they go? The love of justice—the feeling of generosity—the sense of honor—are not these morally good? And yet who will be bold enough to assert that these qualities are nowhere found except in connection with scriptural piety—with positive christian faith? Have Christians a monopoly of all the virtues of social life? Are there not even some that have not christian faith, who yet in many things are examples to those who have, or seem to have; examples, I will not say to those who honor religion, but to those who seem to have "the root of the matter" in them, though set, indeed, in an unkindly and uncongenial soil? Certainly it would be hard to reconcile the general aspects of human society, as these lie open to scrutinizing observation, with any such doctrine of human depravity as would represent all who are destitute of christian faith as alike and utterly destitute of amiable and worthy qualities.

But is any *such* doctrine of human depravity taught in the Bible? That is the question.

Now, that there is a doctrine of human depravity taught in the Bible, is certain, and admits of easy proof. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"—fallen short of the Divine approval. This is language express, intelligible, incapable of being explained away. "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." "There is no man which sinneth not." "The whole world lieth in wickedness."

These, and many similar passages are decisive of the fact, that the Bible ascribes sinfulness to all. *There is a human depravity which is universal.*

But is this depravity such as excludes the existence of any thing worthy or amiable in him to whom it attaches? In order

to maintain the Scripture doctrine, must we pronounce all that seems in itself good in character not religious, to be but deceptive seeming, a hollow mockery? Must we thus perplex and confound all our native notions of right and wrong? Does the Bible teach that none but Christians have any filial affection,—that only true Christians honor their father and mother,—that only Christians have any moral principle that keeps them from killing and stealing?

If I read the scriptures aright, they shut us up to no such necessity. There came once to our Saviour, a young man, of whom the sequel shows that he was unwilling to be a Christian, in whom, nevertheless, that eye which read the heart, saw so much that was amiable and hopeful, that, as is recorded, "Jesus, beholding him, *loved* him;" loved him, though constrained to say to him, "one thing thou lackest;" and that was the one thing needful. This instance, even if it stood alone, would seem decisive that there may be qualities fitted to attract love—worthy and amiable traits—things good in themselves, and as far as they go—in character, which is yet wholly deficient in Christian principle; which has never yielded to the renovating touch of the word and spirit of Christ, the Saviour; which is supremely influenced by the things which are seen and temporal; which has no blood-bought title, and no heaven-derived congeniality, to the abodes of everlasting bliss. Yes, there is character here, all around us, which is not wanting in the kind affections, and the sweet charities without which this earth would be desolate indeed, which yet *is* wanting, fatally wanting, in those high and holy sympathies that ally the soul to Heaven, that make it capable of the joy that reigns there around the throne of God.

What then, is that human depravity which the Bible pronounces universal? In what does it consist? What is its essence? It is *ungodliness—ungodliness. This is the depravity that is total and universal.*

It lies in this, as our Church summary of scripture doctrine well expresses it, that "all mankind have *lost communion with God.*" It consists in this, as our text sets forth, that God has "nourished and brought up children, and they have *rebelled* against him."

> " We live estrang'd, afar from God,
> And love the distance well."

To prove human depravity, we do not refer to the foul and flagrant crimes of the openly vicious; we restrict ourselves to the contemplation of unrenewed human nature in its fairest development, and under all the benignant influences of Christianity. There is many a heart here, that, if charged with a depravity that set at nought all the claims of justice and honor and good fellowship between man and man, would indignantly, and with just and warrantable indignation, repel so foul an accusation. But is there one heart here, at all self-conscious, that when charged with a depravity that involves as its primary element, *ungodliness*, forgetfulness, neglect of God, ingratitude and disobedience to Him,—is there *one* heart here that can pretend to have escaped the contamination of *such* depravity?

Who is there among us, that can trace, from the first thought of God that dawned upon infant years down to the present hour, a joyous and overflowing current of warm and grateful affection to this Benefactor, supremely great, supremely good? Whose memory supplies to its possessor, the blest assurance of having always loved God and kept his commandments?

If a consciousness so blissful dwells not in any of our bosoms; if, instead of this, stimulated memory and awakened conscience bring to view only humiliating reminiscences; if they roll back upon us in melancholy retrospect, long years spent in willing ignorance and wanton neglect of God our Maker; if they vehemently accuse us of many and many a sin committed in open and utter defiance of his high and sacred command; what have we to do but to acknowledge and mourn over a depravity, as strongly testified to by our own awakened consciousness, as it is by the unering oracle of God?

But now when we are convinced—and it seems difficult to stifle the conviction—that a depravity of which ungodliness is the primary element, is justly chargeable upon us all, there is the greatest danger lest this depravity—leaving, as it does, some range for the social virtues, admitting many things good in themselves and beneficial to society to co-exist with it—there is, I say, the extremest danger lest *this depravity*—which does not yet obliterate all the amenities of life, should seem but a small

thing in our eyes—should be counted as involving but light and venial guilt.

Here it is that our moral judgment is itself perverted. Conscience, which draws the line, to our perceptions, between good and evil, is here itself at fault. It feels a bias from the very depravity which it is summoned to recognize and measure. Though we may not be able to disguise to ourselves the fact, that we are chargeable with neglect of God and wilful violation of his commands, we still do not feel the compunction which such a fact would awaken, if our moral sensibilities were in a healthful state. The holy prophet calls heaven and earth to wonder at this unnatural revolt and apostacy. But we, instead of "abhorring ourselves and repenting in dust and ashes," are ready to palliate and excuse our forgetfulness of God, our ingratitude toward him, our transgressions of his law.

Now these palliations and excuses are so many witnesses to the reality and extent of our estrangement from that Almighty and ever-blessed Being, whose paternal care has been unceasingly extended over us, and who has crowned our years with his goodness—years, in which we have lived, as if we were independent of Him, and owed Him no regard.

Could we thus forget our Maker and Benefactor, if we were not fatally alienated from him? Could an upright, unfallen nature thus make itself a voluntary outcast from the great source of all blessedness and joy? Would any star that had not left its prescribed orbit, so wander into the blackness of darkness? We have lost "communion with God;" the free and joyous intercourse of a confiding and loyal spirit with its Creator. His glories are all around us, but we scarcely heed them, scarcely recognize Him in them; his voice speaks within us, in the responses of our moral nature; but how often do we stifle and smother it? The mass of mankind, prone to the dust, absorbed in the pursuits of this transient world, yielding to its temptations, think little of the Hand that feeds them, and in the affluence of his gifts, which they greedily seek after, forget the Giver.

And all this, even when brought distinctly to the consciousness of men, seems to them, it may be, but a small thing. If they had treated a human benefactor so ungratefully, they would

feel the keenest self-reproach. The stain of such ingratitude would be to them like a wound. But they do not feel the claim that their Creator has upon their supreme regard and affection. Because, through the same mercy which has upheld them in life, the blessed light of Christianity shines all around them, and, as a consequence, their moral nature has not been left without softening and ameliorating influences; because the moral constitution which God has given them, does not permit them to be wholly insensible to the beauty of virtue; because they cultivate some traits of character, in themselves good and amiable, but—alas! not from love to Him, and desire to do what is pleasing in His sight, as their great motive—because their sinful alienation from God has not despoiled them of all right and generous sensibilities toward their fellow men—they feel little compunction; they forget that, however commendable in themselves may be particular acts of justice or kindness, still there is a *radical, fatal, all-pervading wrong* in that character which is not supremely influenced by regard for the Divine will; the sin and the misery of this "*lost communion with God*," this outcast and rebel state, take no deep hold upon their spirits; "repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," the Saviour appointed to reconcile us to God and bring our nature into harmony with his holiness and blessedness—these are things unknown to their experience, and undesired as unknown.

Such is the alienated and estranged, the sinful and wretched state of unrenewed man. So true is it that God "hath nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Him."

What stronger proof could there be of the fact of this alienation, than the general insensibility of men to its turpitude? It has proceeded so far as even to obliterate, to some extent, the sense of obligation, the feeling of responsibility toward the Creator. The irreligious man is so unmindful of his Maker, he has so forgotten God that formed him, as even to have lost nearly all sensibility to the guilt which is involved in this forgetfulness. He thinks that if his fellow man cannot reproach him with any flagrant violation of duty, his character of course stands fair in the eye of Heaven. At least, he cherishes the idea that

God will visit no heavy judgment on one who has done so many things well. And yet he knows that the idea of serving God, the sense of allegiance to his Maker, does not lie at the foundation of his virtue. He proceeds on the supposition that the claim of the High and Holy One to the obedience and affections of his rational offspring, is a matter of small moment—is altogether a secondary and trivial claim. He forgets that, however good in themselves, however beneficial to society, may be those traits of character which he views in himself with complacency, there is still no virtue really worthy the name—there is certainly no moral excellence which can be the substratum of heavenly happiness, save that which springs from supreme regard to the Divine approval, and which is nurtured unceasingly, in this unkindly world, by the spiritual appliances of piety and prayer.

If, my friend, what you do justly and kindly toward your fellow men is prompted ultimately by right affections toward the Creator, if it flows forth from a spirit in harmony with his laws—then, indeed, that virtue, though its immediate outgoings are toward earthly objects, nevertheless takes hold on heaven; it has in it an element of permanency; it shall survive the mortal agony and the cold slumber of the tomb: it shall belong to the soul's inalienable treasures through all eternity.

But if, on the other hand, all that in you is good and amiable in your relations to your fellow men, stands far apart from any feeling of love and reverence to the Creator, and wish to meet His approving eye, then is yours at best but an earth-born and perishable virtue; it claims no kindred with the skies; it cannot outlast those human sympathies from which it drew its life; it will not accompany the unclothed spirit to its eternal abode; fair and beautiful though it be, like many other things of earth, it is yet but a transient flower,

"Which springs to fall, and blossoms but to die."

It yields here, indeed, a grateful fragrance; it is well suited to the soil and atmosphere of earth; but it cannot be transplanted to the Paradise above.

When these present scenes shall have given place to the things which are eternal, all vestige of that virtue which "lived

and moved and had its being" only in the circle of human sympathies and regards, which had no link of connection with the throne and government of God—all vestige of that virtue will have vanished away forever.

Would you lay up enduring treasures in heaven? Would you go into the eternity that awaits you, with a spirit already attuned to the heavenly blessedness—capable of unutterable joy? Then must you cultivate and cherish a virtue which derives its nutriment from the soul's relations to its Creator—a virtue which consists in not only doing justly, and loving mercy, but also in "walking humbly with God." "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee." All true happiness here, all hope of a happy hereafter, must begin with drawing nigh unto God, through Jesus Christ his Son. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Draw nigh to Him, by meditating on his revealed truth—by supplicating his grace—by yielding yourself at once to his commands.

And if this great change in your affections toward your Creator, seem too deep and radical to be effected by your own unaided efforts—as I deny not—as I know full well, that it is—yet you have the assurance that His Holy Spirit is freely offered, for Christ's sake, to all who will seek the heavenly influence. "Ask, and it shall be given you." You may have a new moral nature, if you will wait on God for it. The "carnal mind, which is death," may in you be made to give place to the spiritual mind, which is "life and peace," if you will seek the blessed transformation. The dark cloud which overhangs your future, may be henceforth rolled away forever, if you will lay hold of the hope set before you. For the call and the promise of God is, this day, to you, "Turn at my reproof; Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you."

SECOND DISCOURSE.

Rom. viii, 6–8. "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

In a former discourse, we maintained that the Scripture doctrine of human depravity should be carefully distinguished from certain extravagant and indiscriminating statements, which, by doing violence to the testimony of intelligent conviction, tend only to obscure the truth, and break its hold on the consciences of men. We endeavored to show that this doctrine did not charge all mankind with being *totally*, (and hence, of course, *equally*) *vicious and immoral*—with being *totally depraved*, in the *popular sense* of the expression, *total depravity*, that is, utter destitution of all amiable and pleasing qualities. "The love of justice, the feeling of generosity, the sense of honor," are qualities which all must admit to be good, and not evil, and as to which it is utterly useless to deny that they are often found in character which is not influenced by true Christian faith.

Having established this position, it then devolved on us to show what that depravity is, which is universal,—which, derived from our first father, extends to all his posterity,—which inheres in human nature—which the Bible charges upon all our race, equally and without exception, placing them here on the same level, showing them alike in this respect, however unlike in others; declaring that "all have sinned," and that "the whole world lieth in wickedness." We affirmed that the primal element of this depravity is *ungodliness*. "This is the depravity that is total and universal." All have gone astray from God, and are so alienated from Him, that a radical, fatal, all-pervading wrong attaches itself to their very virtues. This doctrine we proceed now further to establish and unfold.

That the elementary principle of human depravity, is *ungodliness*,—that this is the true *Scriptural* view of the matter, is

perhaps sufficiently evinced by the single declaration of our Saviour, that the command to love God with all the heart and soul, is "the first and great command." If this be so, then the opposite to this supreme love, that is, total estrangement from God, is surely the great primal element of human apostacy and degeneracy. It is this state of heart which makes every man, without exception, a transgressor of God's law.

This, too, is precisely the view taken in our church standards of doctrine. In the Confession of faith, chap. vi, section 2d, it is said of the transgression of our first parents, "By this sin they fell from their original righteousness, and *communion with God*, and *so* became dead in sin," &c. It is to this "lost communion with God,"—a most expressive phrase in its application both to the sin and to the misery of man's outcast and rebel state,—(and we find this two-fold application of the phrase made in different passages of our doctrinal standards,)—it is to this "lost communion with God," involving God's exiling man from His holy and happy conversance, and man's exiling God from his sinful and hostile thoughts, that all human wickedness is to be traced. Estrangement from God is the elemental principle of human depravity—the fountain-source of all actual transgressions, whether committed against the first or second table of the law; since it was impossible that the sin which separates man from his God, should not also, to a great extent, sunder the blessed tie of love between man and his fellow man.

This view of the case, carefully followed out, will clear up the perplexity which exists in many minds as to the subject of *total depravity*, and will at the same time vindicate our Presbyterian creed from the charge of contravening the common sense, the intelligent, conscientious convictions of men in respect to the actual moral state of our race. To perceive the complete accordance of the Scripture doctrine with the testimony of observation and consciousness, it is only needful that the subject be studied in the exercise of a sound, discriminating judgment. God's truth needs no supplementing by human intensives; it seeks not to be reinforced by any doubtful auxiliaries.

There is, in fact, a *theological sense* of the term *total depravity*, and kindred expressions, which is quite distinct from the *popular sense;* and it is from failing to apprehend this distinc-

tion, that a perplexity has arisen, from which it is important that so essential a doctrine should be disembarrassed.

When a man has gone to the extremest length of outrageous crime, when every virtuous sensibility seems in him to be quite obliterated and effaced, when he has sunk to the lowest depth of wickedness, not only far beneath the ordinary level of this world's moralities, but also beneath all common development of its crimes—then we say of him, in *popular language*, '*that man is totally depraved.*' But does any thinking person really suppose that when standard theological treatises represent *all mankind* as "totally depraved," they mean that, outside of the Christian Church, there are no naturally amiable dispositions—that only Christians are *honest* and *friendly*—that all the men and women that we meet with in the world are just in that state of extreme, exceptionable, abnormal wickedness, which in popular language is termed *total depravity?* Such a notion carries absurdity on the face of it; for it makes the exception identical with the rule. Total depravity, in the *theological* sense, we affirm of all men; total depravity in the *popular* sense, we do not affirm of all men, nor do we know any one that does.

The truth is, that, in theological treatises, *total depravity* means *total absence of love, total opposition of the heart, to a holy God.* This is the elementary principle of original sin, and of all actual transgressions that proceed from it.

Theology weighs all things in the balance of the sanctuary. It adjusts every thing to a celestial standard. It calls nothing good which is not *spiritually good*—good in the sense of flowing forth from a good fountain in the heart, from a right state of heart toward God. Applying to the moral state of man this searching test, it declares of all, without exception, who are controlled by the principles of unregenerate nature—"there is none that doeth *good*, no, not one."

Is theology wrong in this? Not at all. It follows precisely in the track of the Bible. Nothing could be more pertinent to this theological representation of human depravity, than the passage selected as our text. The state of unregenerate human nature is therein declared to be a state of enmity against God—of irreconcilable opposition to the law of God; so that, as long as this moral state continues, there can proceed from

human character no works acceptable to God. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." How can they "please God," as long as, not loving God, they are continually disobeying the first and greatest of His commandments?

We can now appreciate the true and consistent *theological sense* of all those statements of the Presbyterian and other kindred doctrinal standards, which represent man in his natural state as "wholly defiled"—which affirm the "corruption of his whole nature," which describe him as "utterly indisposed and opposite to *all good*, *&c.*" These expressions are but the rendering in other terms of the Scripture language; "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Theology and the Bible count nothing *good*, but that which is *spiritually good*—which is *religiously good*—which is prompted by, and flows from that *right state of heart toward God*, without which, there can be no genuine, heavenly virtue or happiness, and which right state of heart, the Bible, and theology drawn from the Bible, plainly and strenuously declare is not an attribute of fallen human nature.

Our Presbyterian creed itself furnishes the key to the true meaning of its language in respect to human depravity; for whilst, in the Confession of faith, (chap. vi. section 4,) it is said, "By this original corruption we are utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to *all good*"—in the parallel passage in the larger catechism, (Ans. 25,) the same truth is thus expressed—"The corruption of man's nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is *spiritually good*;" here the "*good*," which the unrenewed man is in the first passage declared opposite to, is in the second passage expressly defined as that which is "*spiritually good*."

There need be no perplexity as to this matter. The distinction between "terrestrial and celestial ethics" may be made sufficiently palpable. Were the question put—"Is there *any good thing* in unregenerate human nature?"—we answer, nothing "*spiritually good*"—nothing "acceptable to God," as flowing from a right state of heart toward Him; but again, in perfect consistency with this, we say that there may be in human character, especially under moral and Christian culture, much that is *good* in the sense of *earthly goodness*—dispositions nat-

urally amiable—morality, not rooted in love toward God. The two answers are perfectly consistent with each other, and will appear so to every one who is skilled to distinguish things that differ.

At the same time, it should be considered that the extent to which these natural virtues are found in a community—the degree in which they characterise modern civilization—is largely due to the genial influences of that Christianity, which produces a certain rectitude of moral sentiment in many a mind that still refuses to subject itself to its spiritual and Divine power. It is the prerogative of Christian truth to nourish all goodness; let then every Christian disciple remember that it is his holy vocation, and should ever be his high and honorable ambition, to glorify God, to illustrate and adorn religion, by cultivating every good trait of character from religious motives, by developing from the best principles the best practice; that, as Heaven's sunshine and rain clothe the fields with verdure, and make them "blossom as the rose," so in him all things lovely—the *most refined* sense of honor, love of justice, kindly and generous feeling, and every kindred excellence, may be seen, springing from a heavenly root, nurtured by heavenly influences, and spreading over the whole life, the beautiful and brilliant efflorescence of Christian virtue.

In this happy land, something of the pure vital air of Christianity we all inhale, mingled with the grosser atmosphere of earth; and hence there goes forth a certain good influence, in Christian communities, under Christian instruction, to hearts in which there is no depth of religious feeling, no genuine Christian faith, nothing "spiritually good." For let moral culture, without piety toward God, rise to its highest possible point, still there must ever be a broad and ineffaceable line of demarcation between the virtues of the merely earthly, and the virtues of the heavenly citizenship. As we believe, so we speak. We firmly believe, and therefore frankly say, that, though we look to the Christian Church as the nursery of all that is amiable and lovely, as well as religious and godly, in human character, still there are *some* who are not Christians, who possess, by nature, dispositions more genial and kindly, who have more *native nobleness of soul*, than *some* who *are* Christians—true Christians, but in

whom Christianity has to struggle against many adverse influences, many ill conditions, physical and moral, many infirmities of the flesh and of the spirit. At the same time, in respect to these naturally amiable but still irreligious ones, we know that their earthly virtues, wanting the soul of virtue, love to God, constitute no fitness for Heaven; we know that, unless they humble themselves before God and come to Christ for salvation, all their good qualities will avail them nothing at the last day; nay, more, a most weighty condemnation will descend upon them, if they abuse Heaven's choicest gifts to palliate and sanctify utter alienation and apostacy from God.

When the true doctrine of human depravity, as entire and universal, is perceived to be, that all have gone astray from *God;* that God has "nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him;" that the carnal mind is so antagonistic to God and God's law, that they who are under its controlling influence, "cannot please God"—cannot please Him whom they do not love, whose first and great commandment they are hence continually breaking—who does not see that, whilst theology and the Bible are in perfect accord in charging upon all without exception a native depravity alienating them from all that is "*spiritually good,*" it is still left by this doctrine an open question, how much of earth's moralities, how much of earth-born, perishable virtue—perishable, because not rooted in loyalty to Heaven's eternal King—may yet survive, in humanity, the ruins of the fall; may make our earth, desolated as it is indeed by sin, still, through God's mercy, to differ, most widely to differ, from that world, where no sweet ties of nature, no gentle influences of human affection, no kindly restraints of Christian instruction, shall mitigate and assuage the ferocious malignity of sin; where the weight of Divine wrath, the hour of mercy having gone by, shall bring out in full intensity all those elements of sin and woe which inhere in a soul, alienated from all true blessedness, rebellious against its God, and sinking forever beneath his frown!

The Scripture doctrine of human depravity, as a state of enmity against God, which in this world is comparatively latent—God in his holiness being so little thought of, that the heart's direful opposition to Him is but little recognised—this doctrine,

thoroughly understood, deeply felt, will leave no serious, earnest thinker, self-complacent in view of any righteousness of his own. Far otherwise. Let him count the number and estimate the value of all those virtues of his which go to make him, so far as they extend, a good citizen of earth—and then let him think whether there be in them all so much as *one spiritual, religious element*, to qualify him to be a citizen of Heaven—so much as *one* virtue, that shall attend him to the spiritual world, and plead for him, and gain his acquittal in Heaven's high chancery—so much as *one* grace of character, that can bear the insufferable brightness of God's presence, and the soul-piercing scrutiny of the omniscient Eye. Let him think, too, and try to think justly and scripturally, of the awful magnitude, the overshadowing blackness, of that guilt, which consists in a heart at enmity with God. Let him think of his continual, *total* aberration from the true, the celestial standard of virtue; let him think of the multitude, and the heinousness of his open and secret sins against the great and holy Being, in whose hand his breath is, and whose goodness has crowned his life. Let him think of these things, as an awakened conscience would prompt him to think, and he will find no one passage in the whole Bible, expressive of human guiltiness in the sight of God, which shall appear to him at all too strong. "Unclean"—"God be merciful to me a sinner"—will be the language of his soul.

"The carnal mind is *enmity* against God." There are those whose consciences might be so far aroused, as to convict them of the sin of living *without God*, who yet would be very slow and reluctant to admit that there is in their hearts any thing like positive enmity *against God*. But can there be alienation in such a case, without there being also enmity? If our Maker would consent always to let us alone—if our relations to him as a moral governor, could be utterly sundered and broken off—if we were never to be summoned to his tribunal—then *alienation* might assume no more positive character than simple *indifference*. But He is the Great Being with whom we have to do; our eternal destiny hangs on his arbitrament; he has placed us under law to Himself; let but that law come home to the heart, and sinful man will soon find himself in open controversy with God. At first, convinced of sin, he may perhaps betake him-

self to prayers and vows of amendment, hoping thus to reconstitute his broken relations with his Maker. But when, further enlightened, he feels the pressure of the Divine law but exasperating the malignity of sin within him; when he finds that pollution still inheres in his good works and prayers and vigils—that supreme love to God being wanting, which is the soul of obedience, without which there can be nothing spiritually good; when he comes to perceive that, in the very purpose and process of thus by his own good works propitiating his Sovereign, he has brought an offering which was not required and could not be accepted, has followed his own choice, not God's command, has obeyed himself, not God, and that all this great and insupportable burden of self-expiation and self-purification has been borne in vain, that there is the same portentous chasm as ever between himself and Heaven—then will there waken within him a most bitter controversy with God, and 'why hast thou made me thus?' will be the rebellious cry of the heart that feels itself still guilty and polluted, and finds that by all its self-prescribed washings it can never make itself clean.

Can there be any "peace with God,"—can there be any thing but hostility toward Him—whilst such a controversy remains unadjusted? So long as we live without God, or without thought of God, it is not strange that we should be insensible to any feeling of positive enmity against Him. But let Him come near to us in judgment—what will then be our feeling toward Him?

If it be indeed true, that every unrenewed heart is not only *without* God, but *against* God—how utterly wanting, when brought to the test of the Divine law, appear all those earthly virtues and moralities which may co-exist with such a state of heart! In the words of another, "let us then hear no longer of one man being better than another because of his natural virtues; or that, because a good citizen of the world, he is therefore fitted for the citizenship of Heaven. This is saying no more than that the summit of a mountain on earth is nearer than its base to the sun in the firmament—while to all sense equal, because of the insignificance of all terrestrial distances when brought to the high standard of astronomy; and thus it is that, on the high moral standard of the upper sanctuary, all men will be found to have fallen immeasurably beneath the perfection of the

Divine law; and that, having lived their whole lives long at a distance from the Father of their spirits, and been all the while breakers of the first and greatest commandment, they are all of them the children of deepest guilt, because one and all the children of ungodliness."

Whoever wishes to know what is his own moral state, let him come to the Bible. He will find there that the law under which he is placed requires him to love God supremely, and his neighbor as himself. Has he kept this law? He knows that he has not. Was it right in God to impose on him such a law? Let him ponder that question, and see whether he is reconciled to God, or in controversy with Him.

If compelled to admit, that the Divine law is the only true standard of rectitude, and that perfect conformity to it is the only true happiness of a created spirit—in other words, that that law is both most righteous and most benevolent—he will then, perhaps, wish to satisfy himself that he has at least *done many things* which it requires. But is this true? Grant that he has done many things which it is set down in the commandments that he should do, has he done them in the *spirit* that the law requires—from the *motive* which alone characterizes real obedience to God? Has he in fact *obeyed God?* Has he done these things *because God requires them?* If he does not love the true God—then all his life long he has been a violator of the first and greatest of the commandments; he has never rendered any true obedience to his Creator. How stands he then in the eye of Heaven? A transgressor—a rebel—at enmity with God. What becomes of all his good deeds—of those things which he has done, which were good in themselves, commendable, praiseworthy, in accordance with the letter of the commandment—as when he has honored parents—when, in utter abhorrence of theft and murder, he has acted justly and honorably in his pecuniary transactions, and done many good and noble acts of kindness and benevolence toward his fellow men—when, moreover, he has paid a decent respect to the Lord's day, and has scrupulously refrained from the vulgar vice and impiety of profaning God's name—what becomes of all these things, confessedly good in themselves, most worthy of commendation and imitation? Will they go for nothing in God's judgment?

Let us ask another question. Will they excuse and justify total alienation of the heart's affections from God? Will they stand in the place of that supreme love to Him, which the law requires, and without which all that earthly virtue hath no root and will wither away, when the soul is taken out of the circle of earthly companionships and regards?

He alone who sees all the workings of the human heart, and knows all the influences that concur to the formation of human character, can decide on the comparative guiltiness of those, who, living amid the clearest light of Christianity, and formed by its genial ministrations to much that is attractive in character, much that is most useful to society, yet refuse to become disciples of Christ—and those on the other hand, who, breathing always an atmosphere of vice, have lived and died, wretched outcasts from all humanizing influences of earth, as well as all redeeming ones of Heaven. We leave that high judgment to God. The thing which it concerns us to consider is, whether that goodness of God which keeps a man from vice—which puts restraint on the evil propensities of his nature, and surrounds him with circumstances most favorable to moral culture,—does not lay upon him weightier obligations to gratitude and love to God, than even the most lavish bestowment of the goods of fortune? And if so, what, and how great, will be his condemnation, if, in that day that shall reveal the secrets of all hearts, he, whom Heaven has endowed with its best gifts, as if to allure him by every sweet attraction, and bind him by the golden chain of love, to the eternal throne, shall be found without loyalty to his Maker—without love to God—at enmity with that holiness, which is the essential glory and beatitude of the Divine nature, and the pure ethereal element of Heaven's eternal bliss?

When we have conceded all that can, with truth, be conceded, as to the existence of things, praiseworthy in themselves, in character which is nevertheless fatally alienated from God, there is yet an impassable gulf between that character, and the virtue and felicity of Heaven. The secrets of the heart, the different degrees of human guilt, are known only to God; but it is a solemn thought, that not only is the moral man in some peculiar danger of losing his soul by trusting in his morality, but, compared with others, on him, if he reject Christ, there

may rest at the last day, a *weightier wrath*—as having sinned against clearer light, greater obligations, more accumulated Heavenly influences—as having abused that very mercy which caused him to differ from the flagrantly vicious, to his hardening himself the more against both the law and the gospel of God. His natural virtues, let them rise as high as they may, still make no appreciable diminution of the distance between his character and the requirements of God's law; yet, vainly trusting in *them,* he has despised the riches of God's goodness, manifested in that gospel, which proffers pardon to the guilty, which reveals a religion for *sinners,* which alone opens the door of Heaven to any of our race. "All have sinned;" at God's tribunal, there will be no question between *guilt* and *innocence;* the only question there will be between guilt unforgiven, and guilt forgiven—between sins retained as a heritage of wo forever, and sins washed away by the precious, atoning blood of Christ—between the sinner who, refusing to become a Christian, rejecting Christ, has "died in his sins,"—and the sinner, who, fleeing to Christ for refuge, has been saved from his sins, saved from wrath through Him.

There is one way of salvation alike for all; all stand on the same footing, in respect to utter guilt before God, and absolute need of salvation by Christ. God grant that each one of us may be found walking in that path of Christian discipleship, which alone conducts to Heaven!

APPENDIX.

THE intelligent reader of these Discourses, will have no difficulty in perceiving that their doctrinal drift is *not to deny* the total depravity that theology affirms, *but to explain wherein it consists.* On this topic, it may be interesting to note the entire harmony of sentiment among divines of the first rank, as evinced in the annexed extracts. The first is from JOHN HOWE, whom Robert Hall pronounces—"unquestionably the greatest of the Puritan Divines." Those which follow, with the exception of that from Hall, are from Presbyterian works, each of rare excellence in its kind.

"A settled aversion from God hath fastened its roots in the very spirits of their minds. This change [of heart] must *chiefly stand* in its becoming *holy* or *godly*—in the alteration of its *dispositions as to God.* To rest in any other *good dispositions* or endowments of mind, is beside the business. There are certain homiletical virtues that much adorn and polish the nature of man, urbanity, fidelity, justice, patience of injuries, compassion towards the miserable, &c., and, indeed, without these, the world would break up, and all civil societies disband; if it at least, they did not in some degree obtain. But in the mean time, men are at the greatest distance imaginable from any disposition to society with God. They have *some love for one another, but none for Him.* And yet it must be remembered, that love to our neighbor, and all the exertions of it, ought to grow from the stock and root of love to God. They are otherwise but spurious virtues; whatever semblance they may have of the true, they want their constituent form, their life and soul." "*Blessedness of the Righteous,*" *first published A. D.* 1668. *Howe's Works, p.* 230.

"There are no degrees in death. All who are dead in sins are equally dead. They may possess *many very estimable and amiable qualities*, such as naturally engage the *love* of their fellow-creatures; but every unsanctified person is *totally* "*alienated* from the life of God," is *totally devoid of love to Him.* In this *alienation*, lies the very core and essence of sin. This aversion to God is the seminal principle of all wickedness."—*Hall's works, vol. iii. pp.* 73–98.

"Enmity against God is the elementary principle of all depravity, and love to God the elementary principle of all holiness."—*Brown's Commentary on* 1 *Peter, p.* 117.

"In every country, and under every form of society, man's heart has glowed with the feelings of private affection and tenderness; and the history of his exploits has been ennobled by many disinterested and heroic exertions. But, without any *invidious detraction* from those *amiable dispositions*,

and those splendid actions, it will occur to you that they do not in reality contradict that system, which places the corruption of human nature in an *estrangement from the true God.* Amidst all the offices of private kindness or of public spirit, men were without God in the world; without that *communion with God*, and that image of God, which are essential to the rectitude of [human] nature."—*Hill's Divinity, p.* 404.

"Are there not amiabilities, and sympathies, and tendernesses, constantly shown by mankind towards each other? Is there a man who has never received such kindness from a fellow creature?—it is most assuredly because, by his rudeness or selfishness, he has repelled it. The person who would maintain of all and each of mankind, that they are utterly selfish, that they possess no other quality but a cold and calculating self-love, such a man is shutting his eyes to human characteristics which fall under our view every day in our intercourse with our fellow-men. But we maintain that the mere possession, or the lavishing of these affections, does not constitute the race morally good. To determine what is the character of man, we must bring the law of God to bear upon it. Now take this law, as requiring supreme love to God. Herein it is, that we are enabled to convince every man of sin. We charge every man with the sin of ungodliness. The circumstance has often been dwelt on by Divines, that ungodliness is the great leading sin of humanity."—*McCosh on the Divine Government, pp.* 361–365.

"We have never had that *love* which is our first and highest duty. It is *in this sense* that men are said to be *totally depraved;* they are *entirely destitute of supreme love* to *God.* They may be *affectionate fathers,* or *kind masters,* or *dutiful sons and daughters;* but they are not obedient children of God. The man who is a rebel against his righteous sovereign, and whose heart is full of enmity to his person and government, may be faithful to his associates and kind to his dependents, but he is always and increasingly guilty as it regards his Ruler."—"*Way of Life,*" *by Prof. Hodge, of Princeton Seminary, p.* 73.

"But there are certain stern theologians who speak of this degeneracy,—not only as universal, that is, extending to one and all of the human family, but as total or complete; insomuch that not one virtue or grace of character is to be found among the sons and daughters of our race. Now we are bound to confess, not that the dogmata of our theological system, but that at least the sayings of certain of our theological writers on the subject of human depravity are not at one with the findings of observation. And we make this admission with all the less fear, that we believe the correction of the language which we deem to be exceptionable, does not weaken, but rather serves to confirm and strengthen the foundations of orthodoxy. Surely then it is rash, and fitted to mislead into a hurtful and wrong impression,—as if theology and observation were not at one,—when told in a style of sweeping invective, by certain defenders of the faith, that humanity out and out is one mass of moral putrefaction, and that naught of the just or the pure, or the lovely, or the virtuous, is anywhere to be found in it. Surely, apart from Christianity, anterior to and distinct from its influence upon men, there are, we do not say in all, but in some, nay, in many, a native integrity

and honor, a generous sensibility to the wants and the wretchedness of others, a delight in the courtesies of benevolent and agreeable fellowship, an utter detestation of falsehood and cruelty, a heartfelt admiration of what is right, a noble and high-toned indignancy at all which is fraudulent or base; these are undoubted phenomena of human character in the world, and that notwithstanding the evasion attempted by those who would fain ascribe them to hypocrisy, or the love of popularity and applause."

"There is a natural virtue upon earth, without which states and commonwealths would go into dissolution—a social morality without which society would soon fall to pieces—a scale of character along which the good and the better and the best ascend in upward progression, till on its loftiest summit where Socrates and Scipio and Epaminondas and Cyrus stand forth to the admiration of the world, we behold the bright examples of unfeigned worth and honor and patriotism.

"Now all this might be admitted, and without prejudice to the cause of orthodoxy. To refuse it were a violence done to experimental truth, and so as to revolt alike the judgments as well as the tastes of men. It is thus that theology, or rather some of its rash and precipitate defenders, have created an unjust and most unnecessary offence against its own articles. They have set doctrine and observation in hostile array against each other; and instead of making truth manifest to the conscience, they have reversed this process by placing conscience or intelligent conviction, on the one hand, and their own strenuous representation of our nature, upon the other, at irreconcilable variance."

"It is not, however, the inconsistency of human writers, but the consistency of the Bible with the findings of experience, that we are most concerned about. Nothing can exceed the terms of degradation in which its inspired authors speak of our fallen humanity, telling us at one time of the filthy rags of our own righteousness; at another, of man being conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity; at a third, of the heart being deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; and, finally, instead of a world brightened or at all beautified even by occasional or but transient gleams of the morally fair and upright and honorable, instead of making any allowance for the amiable instincts and sensibilities of our nature, they tell, without qualification and without softening, of man having gone altogether aside, and of the whole world lying in wickedness.

"There is a patent way of clearing up this perplexity. We need only advert to two distinct moral standards,—each of undoubted reality and truth of application to the conduct and the characters of men. There is a social and there is a divine standard of morality. There is a terrestrial as well as a celestial ethics. There is a duty which man owes to his fellows, which apart from the consideration of Deity, is both recognized and to a great extent observed and proceeded on in society. And, distinct from this, there is a duty which man owes to his God. It is a possible, nay an actual and frequent thing, for one to be decently, even conscientiously and scrupulously observant of the one, and yet wholly unobservant and wholly unmindful of the other. To our view there are no two things more palpably different than the virtues which belong to the citizenship of earth, and the virtues which belong to the citizenship of heaven; and which every aspirant for that blissful and glorious inheritance should be ever practicing as the chief and proper

education for a child of immortality. And what we affirm is, that, on the strength of the former virtues, there be many who are good citizens and good members of society, who yet, in utter destitution of the latter virtues, have no practical sense whatever of the authority of God, and live without Him in the world."

"While we maintain, then, in the theological sense, which is the most important of all, the entire and universal corruption of human nature, we concede to the adversaries of this doctrine that there is virtue in the world, and that apart from Christianity, and beyond the circle of its influences on the character of men. There is a reality, a substantive reality and truth, in the recorded virtues of antiquity. There was virtue in the continence of Scipio; there was virtue in the self-devotion of Regulus; there was virtue, we have no doubt—what a philosophical observer of character could not but have marked and named as virtue, in the understood sense of the term—in the minds of Socrates and Plato. It is opposite to all experience and nature to affirm, that apart from religion, and therefore apart from Christianity, there is really no such thing as social or relative or patriotic virtue in the world. There is a native sense of integrity and honor in many a human bosom. There is a felt obligation in truth, and there would be the utmost moral discomfort attendant on the violation of it. It is neither wisdom nor truth to disallow these things,—they are forced upon our daily observation. We meet with them in the amenities of kind and hospitable intercourse,—we meet with them in the transactions of honorable business,—we meet with them both in the generosities of the public walk, and in the thousand nameless offices of affection which take place in the bosom of families. Human nature, in some of her goodliest specimens, even anterior to the touch of any influence from Christianity, gives forth most pleasing and picturesque exhibitions of virtuousness; and it is not in the power of a relentless dogmatism either to do away their reality, or to do away our admiration of them.

"We should be glad to admit all this, and the more that it can be done with all safety to the theological position, that man by nature is in a state of utter distance and disruption from God. This is the original righteousness from which he has so immeasurably fallen. The moralities which reciprocate between man and man upon earth have not made entire departure from the world. They are the moralities which connect earth with heaven that have wholly disappeared, and cannot be recalled but in virtue of a singular expedient unfolded in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and brought, through the overtures of that gospel, to bear upon the species. When man is charged with guilt in Scripture,—enormous, inexpiable, and infinite guilt,—we rest the truth of that charge upon his ungodliness. It is here that the essence, that the elemental or constituent principle of his depravity lies. What we affirm is,—examine the mental constitution of the best man upon earth who has not been christianized, you will find the honesties and humanities of virtue there,—you will find the magnanimous principle of truth and equity there,—you will find family affection there, and withal find the active principle of benevolence there; but you will not find there either a duteous or an affectionate sense of loyalty to the Lawgiver in heaven. You will not accredit him with godliness because he does many things which God commands, or because he refrains from many things which God forbids, if it is not be-

cause God commands that he does the former, or because God forbids that he refrains from the latter. You will not ascribe to the religious principle what is only due to the social, or the moral, or the constitutional principle. Be on your guard only against this delusion; and you will at once perceive how man, in possession of many decencies and many virtuous accomplishments, may yet be in a state of entire spiritual nakedness. The Being who made him is disowned by him—the God from whom he sprung, and who upholds him continually, is to him an unknown and a forgotten thing. The creature has broken loose from the Creator. He has assumed the sovereign guidance of himself; and in so doing he has usurped the rightful sovereignty of his Maker. He has made a divinity of his own will; and the will of God hath no practical, no overruling influence over this self-regulating, this self-directed creature. In this deep revolt of the inclinations from God; in this lethargy of all sense and all principle toward Him; in this profound slumber that is upon all eyes, so that the Being who gives us every breath, and upholds us in all the functions and faculties of our existence, is wholly unregarded;—in this, there is nothing to move the moral indignancy of our own spirits, for the same death-like insensibility which prevents their being alive to the sense of God, prevents their being alive to the guilt of their ungodliness. But in the jurisprudence of the upper sanctuary, this guilt is enormous, and there brands us with the character, even as it has placed us in the condition, of accursed outcasts from heaven's family. In this world of sunken apathy toward God, there is no recognized standard by which to estimate the atrocity of our moral indifference to Him in whom we live and move and have our being. But the pure intelligences of heaven are all awake to it; and in that place where love to God is the reigning affection, and loyalty to His government the reigning principle of every spirit, nothing can exceed the sense of delinquency wherewith they look on the ingratitude and rebellion of our fallen world. When eyeing this territory of practical atheism, they cannot but regard it as a monstrous anomaly in creation,—a nuisance which, if not transformed, must at length be swept away. As contrasted with the pure services and the lofty adorations of paradise, they must look on our earth, burdened with a graceless and godless progeny, as a spectacle of moral abomination. This unnatural enmity, or even unconcern, of man to his Maker, must be to them an object of utter loathsomeness; and when they look down upon a world that has exiled God from its affections, they will hold it a righteous thing that such a world should be exiled from its God."—*Chalmers' Institutes of Theology, vol.* 1, *pp.* 397–399, and 523–526.

These views will be more profoundly impressive to reflecting minds, than the most lavish indiscriminate vituperation of human character that leaves the hearer (if not the speaker) in serious doubt, whether the thing affirmed be exactly *true;* which must be the case, if the assertion be, that *all* are, in the *popular* sense, *totally*, and hence *equally* depraved. To those who lean on authority, the name of CHALMERS should suffice to guaranty the consistency of these views with the Presbyterian creed. To feel any apprehensions

as to the *orthodoxy* of this most eminent teacher of theology in the always orthodox church of Scotland, were a thing *most superfluous*.*

It is much to be deprecated, that the mind should be turned away from the deep *feeling* of religious truth, to view it chiefly in connectiou with *party badges and watchwords*,—things that degrade and desecrate whatever they touch. The difference between Dr. Chalmers, and some other expounders of our creed, is, that he excels in developing its doctrines in their Scriptural simplicity, free from those human additions by which they have been sometimes overlaid and well nigh smothered ; that he never either ignores, or contracts, or dilutes, one statement of the Bible, with a view to give prominence or effect to another, but does equal justice to all, unfettered by artificial systems ; and that, bringing to the intense study of the oracles of God, not only a mind saturated with true philosophy, but also a heart warm and glowing with love to Divine truth, he has, more than others, exhibited Theology in her true character,—not as a piece of human handiwork, a creation of human ingenuity, a congeries of tenuous speculations, cold, soulless, scholastic,—not like a bundle of dry bones in an anatomical museum,—but instinct with life, bearing the impress of Divinity, a true emanation from God.

Unless the greatest Divines are in ignorance as to the subjects which they have most intently studied, the truth respecting the moral state of man is to be made manifest to the conscience,—*not* by universally *denying the existence*, in unconverted humanity, of those "HOMILETICAL VIRTUES that much adorn and polish the nature of man, *urbanity, fidelity, justice, &c.*"—but by *demonstrating their fatal deficiency*, when they have no root in the love of God, and hence no adaptation to the atmosphere of Heaven.

* For this remark, otherwise itself "most superfluous," and for so copious citation, the reader will infer the existence of special reasons, connected with the writer's vicinage. For similar reasons, in the first of these Discourses, the doctrine is set forth precisely as preached. To the second, several paragraphs have been added, being needful to replace quotations here transferred to the Appendix.